



COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, ENERGY AND TRADE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5200

June 3, 2019

Ryan Palmer
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

VIA ECFS

Re: *American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, Petition for Reconsideration, CC
Docket 02-6*

Dear Mr. Palmer:

I would like to express my support for the government-owned American Samoa Telecommunications Authority's ("ASTCA's") request for reconsideration. ASTCA missed an E-rate filing deadline due to a series of unfortunate and truly extraordinary circumstances, including the effects of Cyclone Gita on American Samoa and the sudden death of the company's chief executive officer ("CEO"). As a result of its late filing, and unless the Wireline Competition Bureau grants ASTCA's pending request, ASTCA will not be eligible to receive E-rate program monies for the services it provided the American Samoa Department of Education (DOE) during Funding Year 2017. Depriving ASTCA of over half a million dollars in E-rate funds would impair the company's ability to offer American Samoa's residents, including thousands of students, more and better communications services.

I have great esteem for the outstanding work that the Federal Communications Commission, the Wireline Competition Bureau, and the Universal Service Administrative Company do to implement the E-rate program authorized by Congress, and I firmly believe in the need for strict Universal Service Fund rules if we are to safeguard the public interest. I am likewise respectful of the process by which a service provider like ASTCA can seek a special exception to the E-rate rules when extraordinary circumstances exist and the public interest is served by such exception.

Gita, and the devastation it unleashed on American Samoa, created extraordinary circumstances for ASTCA, the DOE and the rest of American Samoa's government operations—the cyclone disrupted each and every single aspect of life in the territory. I am grateful to President Donald J. Trump for recognizing Gita as a federal disaster and making over \$20 million in federal aid available to American Samoa's residents. I am optimistic that the Bureau will similarly recognize the huge impact Gita had on our education system and

on our state-owned telecommunications company, ASTCA, even many months after the heavy rains and strong winds subsided.

As if the devastation of Gita had not been enough, the death of ASTCA's CEO further complicated matters by leaving the company without the resources it needed to successfully navigate the applicable E-rate procedures in a timely manner.

Since I became aware that ASTCA missed its E-rate program deadline, I have been in contact with the American Samoa Government, including the leadership at DOE and at ASTCA. After our conversations, I am confident that ASTCA's request for reconsideration is not frivolous, the result of incompetence, or a sign of disrespect or disregard for federal rules. ASTCA, DOE, and the rest of the American Samoa Government did the best they could to return to normalcy as quickly as possible after the unusual upheaval they each faced in 2018. ASTCA, DOE, and the rest of the American Samoa Government have learned from the challenges they overcame, and everyone is committed to ensuring strict compliance with all E-rate program requirements going forward.

The future generation of American Samoa depends on E-rate-funded services. Without robust and reliable access to connectivity, our people—particularly our students—will not be prepared to fully participate in the global economy or face the challenges of an increasingly digital world. Granting ASTCA's request and allowing ASTCA to seek reimbursement for the E-rate services it provided during Funding Year 2017 will go a long way towards ensuring that the people of American Samoa are not left behind.

Sincerely,



Aumua Amata C. Radewagen
Member of Congress